

The Bay-Delta Urban Coalition

**Solano County
Water Agency**

**East Bay Municipal
Utility District**

City and County of San Francisco **Alameda County
Water District**

Public Utilities Commission **Santa Clara Valley
Water District**

Central Coast Water Authority **Metropolitan Water District
of Southern California**

**Central and West Basin
Municipal Water District**

**Municipal Water District
of Orange County**

**Coachella Valley
Water District**

**San Diego County
Water Authority**

What Urban California Needs from the CALFED Bay-Delta Solution

California's Bay-Delta Estuary is broken, and its degraded state affects both public health and the urban economy. For this reason, the state's urban communities and businesses have a huge stake in CALFED's effort to solve problems affecting California's Bay-Delta. The Bay-Delta Urban Coalition¹ represents 11 public agencies that collectively supply water to more than 22 million Californians, and support urban economies that generate more than three-quarters of the state's \$1 trillion gross annual product.

Urban water agencies face significant challenges in providing high quality, reliable water to the public, and these challenges will increase in the future. By 2020, California's population is projected to grow almost 50 percent, to more than 47 million people. Drinking water standards are expected to become more and more stringent. The cost of drinking water treatment and water recycling continues to spiral upward.

The ability of urban water agencies to meet these challenges directly depends on the success of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The Bay-Delta Urban Coalition is committed to the development of a balanced, consensus-based solution that meets the needs of all Californians. For urban California, the CALFED solution must:

- **Improve the quality of drinking water supplies from the Delta in the near and long term.** In the near term (CALFED's seven-year-long Stage 1), CALFED solution must substantially reduce organic carbon, bromide and salinity levels in Delta water. Over the long term, these levels must be reduced so they are comparable with levels in other U.S. metropolitan areas. CALFED must also maintain the quality and reliability of urban water supplies from the watershed surrounding the Delta.
- **Provide long-term protection for the Estuary** that will sustain fish and wildlife dependent on the Bay-Delta. The ecosystem program should be adaptively managed and address all factors that degrade the Estuary.
- **Include additional storage in Stage 1 and the long term** to make the Delta system more flexible and reliable for all beneficial uses. CALFED must strengthen and extend the Bay-Delta Accord, to ensure a stable urban water supply during Stage 1.
- **Recognize that "soft path" actions** – water conservation, water recycling, water transfers and groundwater storage – will not provide the water quality improvements needed to ensure public health.
- **Assure that surface storage, new Delta conveyance facilities, and other facilities remain viable options.** Planning, environmental permitting and other actions for potential projects must be included in Stage 1.

¹ *The Bay-Delta Urban Coalition consists of eleven public agencies including Alameda County Water District; Central Coast Water Authority; Central and West Basin Municipal Water District; City and County of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission; Coachella Valley Water District; East Bay Municipal Utility District; Metropolitan Water District of Southern California; Municipal Water District of Orange County; San Diego County Water Authority; Santa Clara Valley Water District; and Solano County Water Agency.*

What Urban California Needs from the CALFED Bay-Delta Solution

Bay Delta Urban Coalition

IMPROVED WATER QUALITY

The CALFED solution must improve the quality of drinking water supplies from the Delta in the near and long term. In the near term (CALFED's seven-year-long Stage 1), the CALFED solution must substantially reduce organic carbon, bromide and salinity levels in Delta water. Over the long term, these levels must be reduced so they are comparable to levels for other major U.S. metropolitan areas. CALFED also must maintain the quality and reliability of urban water supplies from the watershed surrounding the Delta.

- The drinking water quality of Delta water is relatively poor. Delta water contains high concentrations of bromide and organic carbon, which combine with disinfectants used in the drinking water treatment process to form harmful by-products.
- To allow urban agencies to meet future drinking water standards, bromide and organic carbon levels in Delta water must be reduced. Urban agencies are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in upgraded treatment technology to maintain a safe drinking water supply. However, technology with the potential to meet future drinking water standards with existing Delta water quality is unavailable at the scale needed for much of urban California and, if available, would be very expensive for ratepayers.
- The salt content of Delta water must be reduced if urban agencies are to fully utilize their local water supplies and expand water recycling and groundwater development efforts. Salt limits the suitability of wastewater for recycling and accumulates in groundwater basins. Many urban agencies manage salt impacts by blending Delta water with other supplies. Reducing the salt content of Delta water will allow agencies to use their other supplies more efficiently.
- CALFED ecosystem restoration measures must not reduce the quality or reliability of existing water supplies.

COMPREHENSIVE ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM

CALFED's Ecosystem Restoration Program must provide long-term protection for the Bay-Delta Estuary that will sustain fish and wildlife dependent on the Delta. The ecosystem restoration program should be adaptively managed and address all factors that degrade the Bay-Delta ecosystem.

- A key mandate of the Ecosystem Restoration Program is to address water supply reliability, water quality, levee system integrity, and ecosystem needs in an integrated, comprehensive manner. Ecosystem restoration measures must be coordinated with and complement other CALFED actions and should be adjusted, as needed, to reflect scientific and monitoring data.
- CALFED's Ecosystem Restoration Program provides a unique opportunity to develop a collaborative relationship between CALFED agencies and stakeholder groups. CALFED must build on this opportunity by establishing an ecosystem management entity that provides stakeholders a meaningful role in the decision-making process.

IMPROVED WATER SUPPLY RELIABILITY

The CALFED solution must include additional storage in Stage 1 and the long term to make the Delta system more flexible and reliable for all beneficial uses. CALFED must strengthen and extend the Bay-Delta Accord to ensure a stable urban water supply during Stage 1.

- Urban water supplies have become significantly less reliable due to increasing regulatory actions to protect the Bay-Delta ecosystem. In 1994, the Bay-Delta Accord provided the stability needed for CALFED to develop a long-term Bay-Delta solution. As CALFED moves forward with implementation in Stage 1, it must maintain the reliability of existing urban and agricultural water supplies by extending and strengthening the Bay-Delta Accord.
- Stage 1 should include the development of groundwater storage programs to provide early supply reliability improvements for urban and agricultural water users. Additional water storage also benefits the ecosystem by reducing dry-year demands on the Delta when environmental resources are more likely to be experiencing stress.

- Surface water storage provides additional capabilities and benefits not provided by groundwater storage, including the ability to capture high flows, to release flows quickly to meet ecosystem needs, or to release flows more slowly to maximize groundwater recharge. Surface water storage can also facilitate water transfers, improve water quality, and provide flood control and recreational opportunities.
- CALFED is completing the evaluation of surface storage in its Programmatic EIS/EIR, which is scheduled for certification in 1999. Urban Coalition members believe this evaluation will show that surface water storage is necessary to meet multiple CALFED objectives.
- In addition to providing more storage, the CALFED solution must improve the capability of the Delta conveyance system. Operational rules must allow increased diversions during wet periods, when impacts on fish are low, and enable water transfers in all year types.

COMMITMENT TO SOFT PATH INVESTMENTS AS PART OF A BALANCED SOLUTION

The CALFED solution recognizes that soft path actions – water conservation, water recycling, water transfers and groundwater storage – will help reduce demands on the Bay-Delta. However, they will not necessarily improve operation of the Delta system or provide essential water quality and ecosystem improvements.

- The Urban Coalition supports soft path actions as one element of a balanced CALFED solution. Urban agencies have invested an estimated \$2.25 billion in cost-effective water recycling and conservation programs since 1990. If appropriate funding is provided in Stage 1 and beyond, more recycling and conservation can be accomplished through projects that benefit the state, but are not cost-effective at the local level.
- Soft path actions alone will not provide the water quality improvements needed by urban agencies. Soft path investments cannot reduce bromide and organic carbon concentrations to acceptable levels or reduce salinity to levels needed for improved water management.
- The success of soft path actions will depend in part on making physical and operational improvements in the Delta system. To use groundwater storage effectively and reduce demands on the Delta during dry years, for example, agencies must be able to divert more water during wet periods, when impacts on fish are reduced. Similarly, the success of water transfers depends on Delta facilities that have adequate capacity to convey transfer water efficiently and reliably.

STAGED IMPLEMENTATION OF A LONG-TERM SOLUTION

CALFED must ensure that surface storage, new Delta conveyance facilities, and other facilities that will provide reliable, high quality water supplies for urban uses remain viable options. Planning, environmental permitting and other actions for these potential projects must be included in Stage 1.

- The Urban Coalition is committed to exploring any and all options for resolving water quality and system reliability. In addition, the Urban Coalition supports CALFED's proposal to carry out the long-term CALFED solution in stages, given the complexity of the Bay-Delta system. However, this staged approach delays decisions on surface storage and new Delta conveyance facilities, which Urban Coalition members believe may be needed in the long term to provide reliable, high quality water and protect fisheries.
- The CALFED Programmatic EIS/EIR must contain the necessary analysis and findings to ensure potential future surface storage and other water quality and reliability facilities can be implemented without additional programmatic analysis. CALFED also must establish during Stage 1 a clear decision-making process, schedule, and criteria that will trigger future actions.
- CALFED activities must be carefully balanced to ensure all interests move forward together. Progress in all four CALFED Program areas – ecosystem restoration, water quality, water supply reliability, and levee system integrity – should be comparable in terms of timing and magnitude.

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